

Computer shorthand saves time

Did you ever wish you could type tedious items like mailing lists faster and more accurately — without taking typing lessons to improve your speed?

A pair of programs — Dynakey and Datalift, published by Peoplesmith Software — just might fit the bill. Both allow you to type in abbreviations for longer words as you're working on a mailing list.

If you want to type in "Mr. and Mrs.," you can save nine key-strokes by just typing in "MM."

Both programs convert your typing shorthand to the actual words they represent.

But each program works differently, so you need to choose between them based on your office needs.

■ Dynakey, priced at \$199 a copy, works by converting keystrokes to the longer words they represent as you type. You set up the fields in the mailing list, and the program knows how to translate by interpreting the abbreviation in the context of its field. For example, "GM" typed into the title field of the mailing list record will



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translate to "general manager," but "GM" typed into the company field will translate to "General Motors Corp." This feature is unique.

Similar programs, such as PRD+, only convert abbreviations throughout the text. Here are some of the built-in abbreviations that come with the program: EVP is short for executive vice president; INT'L translates to international; and UCLA will be typed in as University of California, Los Angeles.

There are dozens of shorter abbreviations that you'll use everyday: AR for accounts receivable; CO for company; and BLVD for boulevard.

By using Dynakey to type your mailing lists, the publisher claims keystrokes can be reduced by 60

percent.

■ Datalift, on the other hand, costs \$149 a copy, and it uses a somewhat different tack. It does the same kind of translating, but it works on the fields in pre-existing files, ones that you previously have entered into the computer, or ones that you have purchased from someone else. This program is especially handy where you have more than one typist putting addresses on a list.

The programs — available from Peoplesmith Software, 18 Damon Road, P.O. Box 384, North Scituate, Mass., 02060, (800) 777-2460 — are easy to use and come with an extensive glossary of abbreviations. In either case, you can add to the glossaries as needed.

Time, sanity and accuracy aren't the only things at stake here.

Each program also goes a long way toward promoting the good looks of your mailing labels, making them appear more personal and less computer-generated.

But there is a down side. These two programs are limited to creat-

ing faster typing and good looks for your mailing lists only where there are predefined fields. If you're looking for a typing shorthand program that you could use for other documents besides mailing lists, a program like PRD+, which will translate abbreviations anywhere in your word processing document, is the answer. It's available from Productivity Software, 1220 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10001, (212) 967-8666, for \$89.95.

■ The bottom line: I am very impressed with the capabilities of Dynakey and Datalift and the improvements they offer for mailing list input. I would recommend either or both, depending upon your needs.

Either would pay for itself several times over by assuring consistent and good-looking mailing labels.

Hillel Segal's column includes evaluations of gadgets, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity. Segal is a management consultant based in Boulder.